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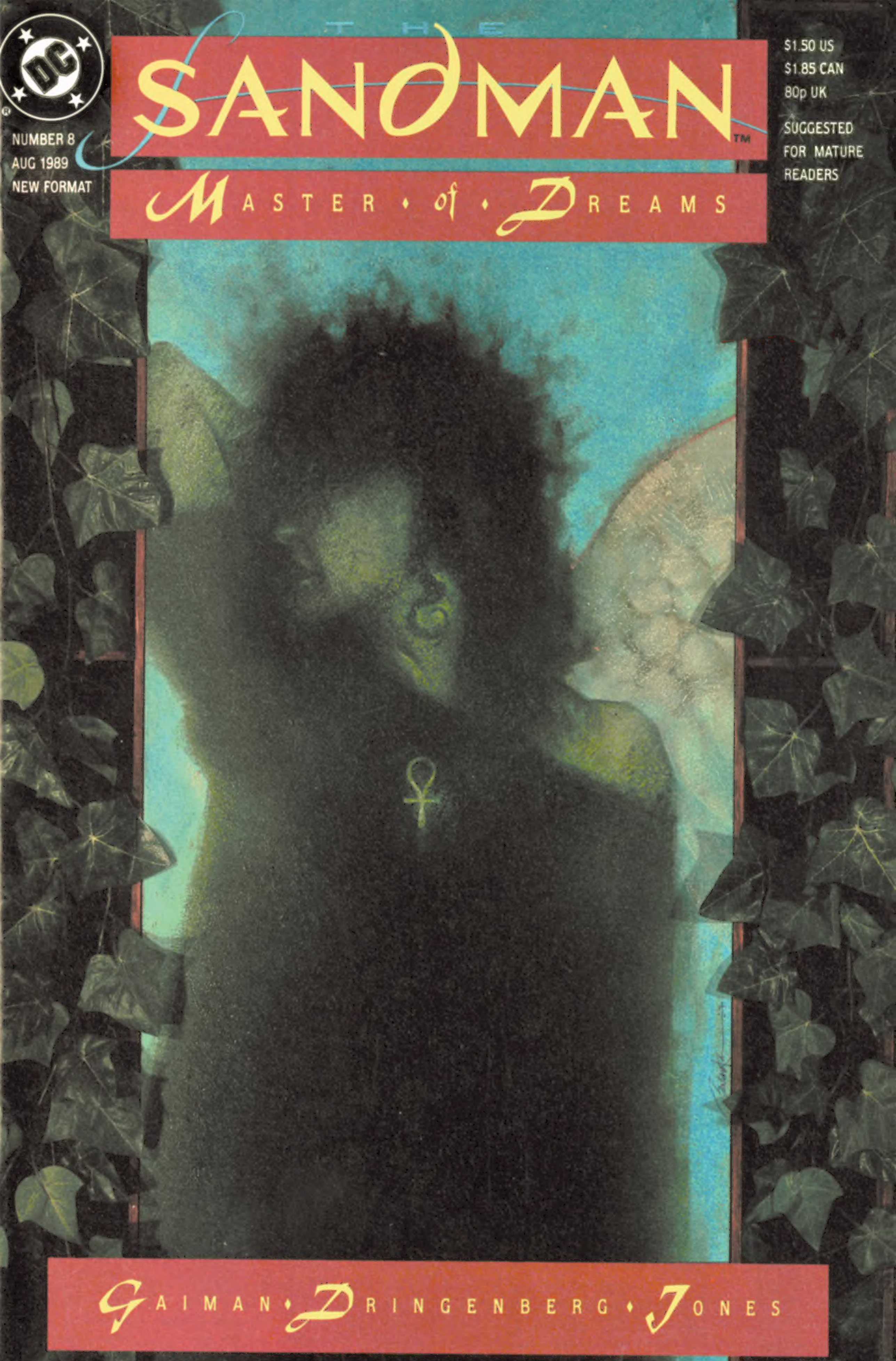

GAIMAN • DRINGENBERG • JONES

"THE SOUND OF HER WINGS"

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PUNT!

PUNT!

FLUT
FLUT
FLUT
FLUT
PUNT!

HEY! MISTER!

THAT WAS A KILLER CATCH, MAN! TOTALLY WICKED.

CAN I HAVE THE BALL BACK?

Hmm? Oh... this? Here.

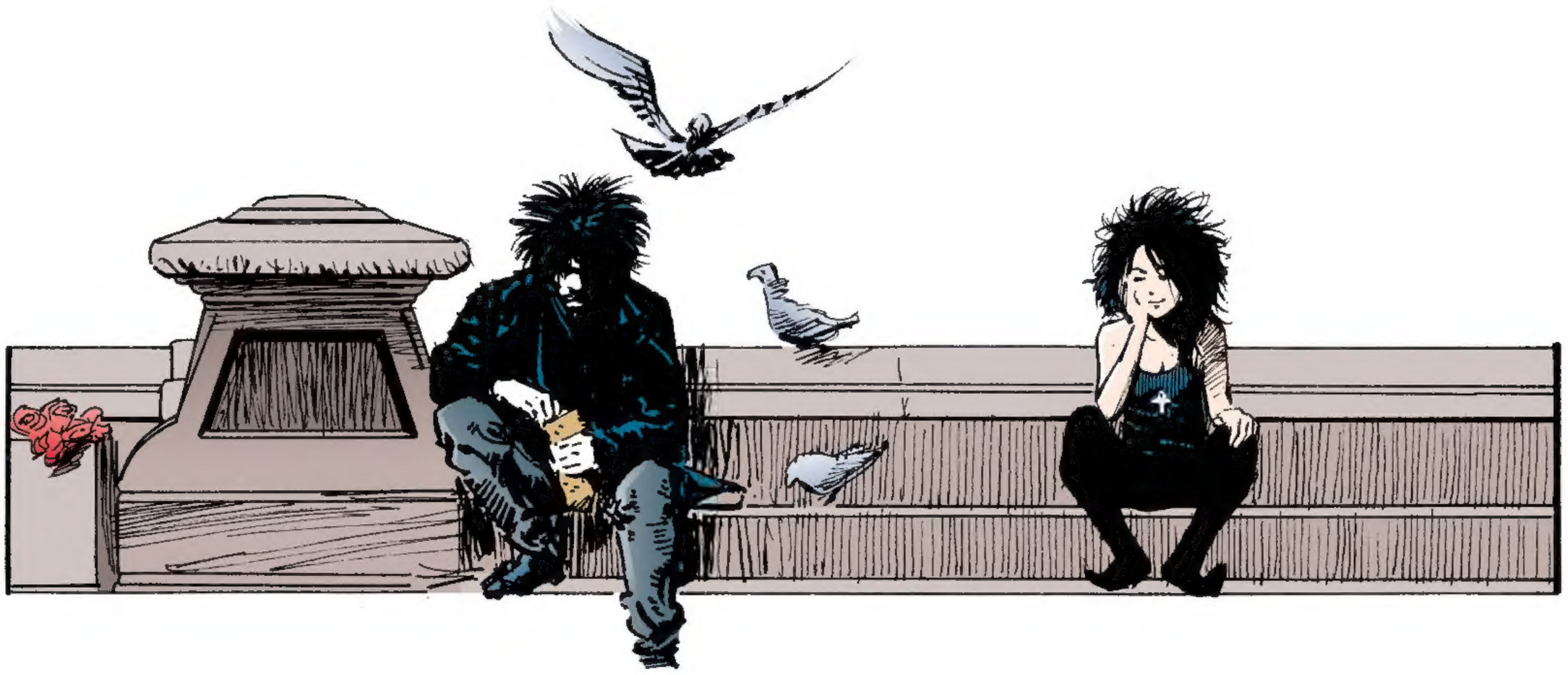
THANKS.

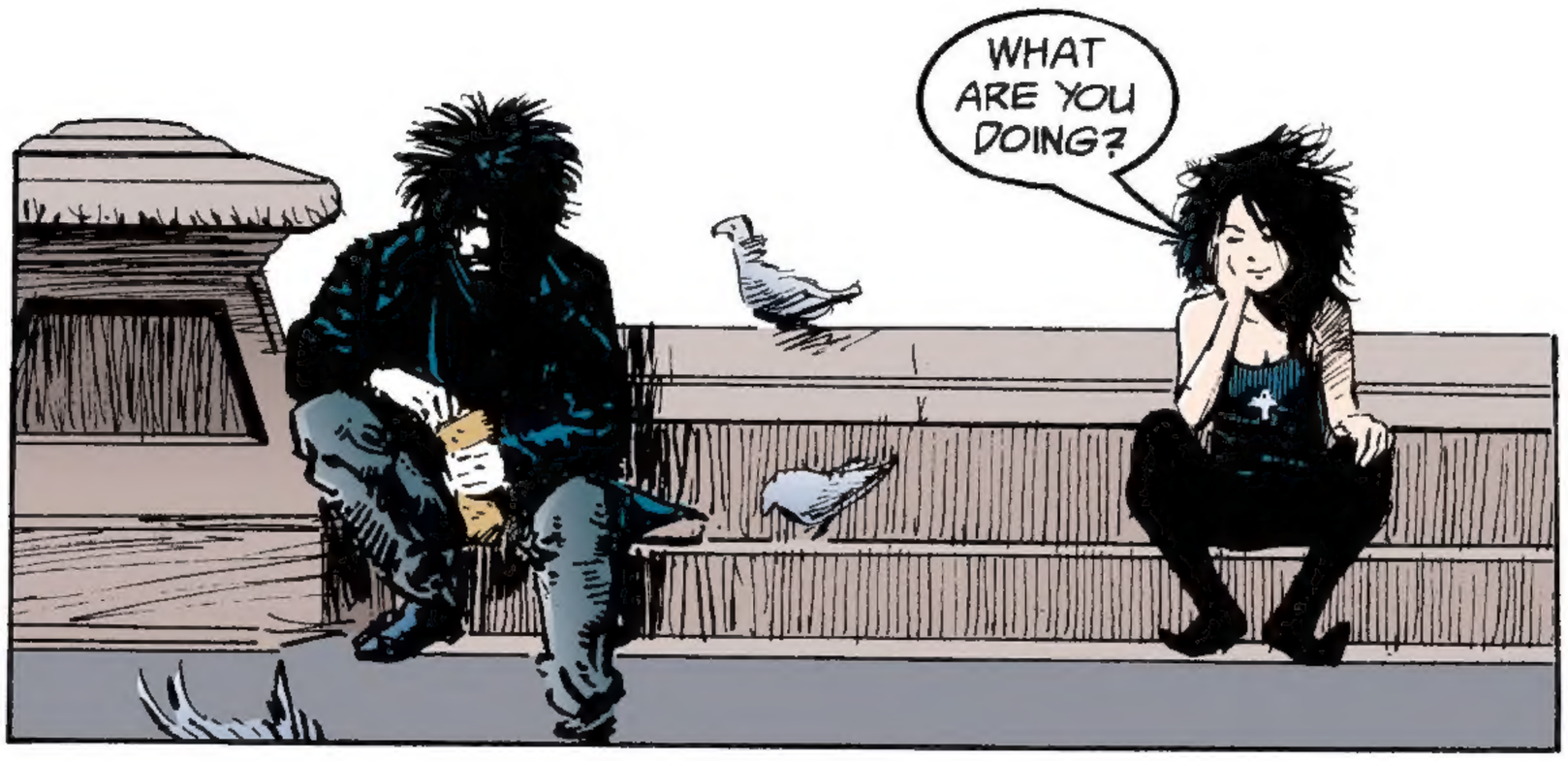
YOU WANNA PLAY BALL?

PUNT!

No. No, thank you. I am feeding the pigeons.

THASS COOL.




WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

Feeding the pigeons.

YOU DO THAT TOO MUCH, YOU KNOW WHAT YOU GET?

FAT PIGEONS!
THAT'S A LINE FROM "MARY POPPINS".

I *LOVE* THAT MOVIE. YOU EVER SEE IT?

No.

THERE'S THIS GUY WHO'S *UTTERLY* A BANKER, AND HE DOESN'T HAVE *TIME* FOR HIS FAMILY, OR FOR *LIVING*, OR ANYTHING.

AND MARY POPPINS, SHE COMES DOWN FROM THE CLOUDS, AND SHE SHOWS HIM WHAT'S *IMPORTANT*.

FUN. FLYING *KITES*, ALL THAT STUFF.

SUPERCALIFRAGILISTICEXPIALIDOCIOUS!

What?

*SUPER-CALI-FRAGIL-IST*IC-*EXPI-ALI-DOC*IOUS. *UTTERLY* FAN*TAB*ULOUS WORD, HUH? IT MEANS, Y'KNOW, GREAT.

WONDERFUL

GINCHY. GNARLY.

PEACHY KEEN!

WOOGA-WOOGA-WOOGA! VROOOOOM! Yiiiiiiiii!!

Ah.

IT'S A *CUTE* MOVIE. MAYBE NOT *EVERY*BODY'S THING, BUT, Y'KNOW...

FLUT FLUT

DICK VAN DYKE'S BRITISH ACCENT DEFIES *BELIEF*. "HOH 'HITS A JOLLY 'OLIEDYE WIV YEW, MAIREE PAWPINS!"

Y'KNOW. *CUTE*.

OK.

SO. WHAT'S THE MATTER?

What do you mean?

WHAT'S THE MATTER? I KNOW *SOMETHING'S* WRONG.

I MEAN, *LOOK* AT YOU! SITTING HERE, MOPING.

IT ISN'T LIKE YOU.

No... perhaps it isn't.

I don't know what's wrong. But you're right. Something is... the matter.

When they captured me, imprisoned in their box, I had just one thought: Revenge.

By the time I freed myself, my original captor had gone the way of mortals, and I took my vengeance on his son.

It felt... fine, I suppose.

But it didn't feel as-- satisfying-- as I had expected.

In the interim, my dreamworld had fallen apart. I needed my tools, long since stolen and scattered.

One by one I found them.

Eventually, I found them.

The pouch was relatively easy.

To regain the helmet I challenged a demon, dared the Hordes of Hell, faced down Lucifer himself.

Hahn.

That left only the ruby.

The ruby was...

A human had been using it. I hate to think what toll it must have taken on his mind, on his soul...

We fought, in dreams. The stone, no longer mine, was sucking me into its fabric. It was...

...terrible.

And thinking it was my life he was crushing, he destroyed the ruby. HE DESTROYED IT. It freed me.

More than that. It freed everything of me that was in the stone. I got it ALL back...

I was more powerful than I had been in eons. I returned the human to the madhouse...

You see, until then I'd been driven. I'd had a true quest, a purpose beyond my function--and then, suddenly, the quest was over.

I felt...drained. Disappointed. Let down.

Does that make sense? I had been sure that as soon as I had everything back I'd feel good. But inside I felt worse than when I started.

I feel like... nothing.

There. you asked.

I'm sorry. Maybe I don't have an answer.

HAVE YOU FINISHED?

Yes.

YOU COULD HAVE CALLED ME, YOU KNOW.

I didn't want to worry you.

I. DON'T. BE*LIEVE*. IT.

LET ME TELL YOU SOMETHING, DREAM. AND I'M ONLY GOING TO SAY THIS *ONCE*, SO YOU'D BETTER PAY ATTENTION.

YOU ARE *UTTERLY* THE STUPIDEST, MOST *SELF-CENTERED*, APPALLINGEST *EXCUSE* FOR AN *ANTHROPOMORPHIC PERSONIFICATION* ON *THIS* OR ANY *OTHER* PLANE!

AN *IN*FANTILE, ADO*LESCENT*, PATHETIC SPECIMEN!

FEELING ALL *SORRY* FOR YOURSELF BECAUSE YOUR LITTLE *GAME* IS *OVER*, AND YOU HAVEN'T GOT THE--THE *BALLS* TO GO AND FIND A *NEW* ONE!

SNATCH

FLUT FLUT

BIP!

I DON'T BELIEVE THIS. *DREAM*, YOU'RE AS *BAD* AS, AS--

AS *DESIRE*!

OR *WORSE*!

DIDN'T IT *OCCUR* TO YOU THAT I'D BE WORRIED *SILLY* ABOUT YOU?

HEY!

I didn't think--

THAT'S EXACTLY *IT*! YOU DIDN'T *THINK*! YOU *LUMMOX*, YOU OVERGROWN BUBBLE-HEADED--

OOOOOOOOOHHH!

WOW!

GIVE ME *STRENGTH*!

ANOTHER *KILLER* CATCH! YOU'RE AS *MEAN* A BALL-PLAYER AS YOUR *FRIEND* HERE.

HE'S *NOT* MY FRIEND.

HE'S MY *BROTHER*. AND HE'S AN *IDIOT*!

Just feeding the birds.

LOOK. I CAN'T STAY HERE ALL DAY. I GOT WORK TO DO.

YOU CAN COME WITH ME, OR YOU CAN STAY HERE AND SULK. I DON'T MIND EITHER WAY.

I'll come with you, I suppose.

DON'T DO ME ANY FAVORS.

SO, HEY, FOX, LIKE, UH, YOU WANT A SODA? COULD I SEE YOU AGAIN?

SURE, FRANKLIN. YOU'LL SEE ME AGAIN. SOON.

OOOOKAY!

HEYUH--HOW'D YOU KNOW MY NAME'S...

...FRANKLIN...?

Soundless, we travel. No heads turn to mark our passing.

The churning crowd parts as we walk through it, looking everywhere else, but not at us.

In the world of the waking, of the living, we move silent as a breath of cool wind.

As we pass them, people shiver and look away, mutter to each other.

"Feels like someone walking over my grave," I heard one man say.

"Like someone just walked over my grave."

Violin music echoes down the stairwell, sounding frail and out of place. I recognize the tune, although it is being played very badly.

I heard it last in London, two hundred years ago.

CAN YOU ROCKER ROMANY?
CAN YOU PATTER FLASH?
CAN YOU ROCKER ROMANY?
CAN YOU FAKE A BOSH?
YES. I CAN PATTER ROMANY, HARRY. CAN YOU?
HUNH? I DIDN'T HEAR NOBODY COME IN ...
CAN I PATTER ROMANY?
NOT SO GOOD. BUT I CAN FAKE A BOSH. MEANS T' PLAY THE FIDDLE. I'M NOT REAL ROMANY...
USED TO PLAY THE RESTAURANTS AN' CLUBS, WHEN I WAS YOUNGER.
SCARF ROUND MY HEAD. YOU PICK UP STUFF...
=HHRRACK!=
NAW, I'M NO GYPSY. I'M A YID. AN OLD JEW DYING LONELY IN NEW YORK, YOU KNOW?
YES, I KNOW WHO YOU ARE, HARRY. DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM?
YOU? YOU'RE... NO! NOT YET! ...PLEASE?
YEAH, I KNOW WHO YOU ARE.

HRRUCCK!

'SCUSE ME. SOMETHING I GOT TO SAY. ALWAYS USED TO WONDER IF I WOULD, BUT, Y'KNOW, WHAT TH' HEY...

SH'MA YISROEL.

ADONAI ELOHAYNU, ADONAI E'HOD.

HEAR, O ISRAEL...

THE LORD OUR GOD...

THE LORD IS ONE.

I LOOK SO EMPTY. I LOOK SO OLD.

IT'S GOOD THAT I SAID THE SH'MA. MY OLD MAN ALWAYS SAID IT GUARANTEED YOU A PLACE IN HEAVEN. IF YOU BELIEVE IN HEAVEN...

SO. I'M DEAD.

NOW WHAT?

NOW'S WHEN YOU FIND OUT, HARRY.

She draws him close.

From the darkness I hear the beating of mighty wings...

I THOUGHT HE WAS *SWEET.* DIDN'T YOU?

Sweet? I do not know. Perhaps.

My sister. When I was captured...

...it was not ME they wanted. It was you.

YEAH. I KNOW.

C'MON, I DON'T WANT TO MISS THE NEXT ONE.

AFTERNOON, NOBODY WANTS COMEDY. THEY WANT TO DRINK IN PEACE, MAKE ASSIGNATIONS, DO THEIR DEALS. ESMÉ HAS TO FIGHT FOR EVERY LAUGH SHE GETS.

IT BEATS WAITING TABLES.

HER HANDS ARE SWEATING.

...SERIOUSLY, DON'T YOU EVER *WONDER* ABOUT BATMAN? HOW HE GOT STARTED? I CAN SEE HIM OVER BREAKFAST SAYING TO HIS WIFE:

"MORNING, HON. LISTEN, I GOT SOMETHING TO TELL YA. I UH, I *QUIT* THE JOB AT THE *AD AGENCY.*"

"SO WHADAYA GOING TO DO *NOW*, RALPHIE? *HUH?*

"I GOT IT *ALL* FIGURED OUT. I'M GONNA DRESS UP LIKE A *BAT* AND FIGHT *CRIME.*"

"YOU'RE GONNA *WHAAT?* RALPHIE, HAVE YOU TALKED THIS OVER WITH YOUR ANALYST?"

HA HA HA HA HA

AND WHAT ABOUT *ROBIN?* NOW THAT KID WAS...

But if they HAD captured you, the consequences--

SHH! I WANT TO HEAR THIS.

HAHAHAHAHA

"HEY, MA BELL-- REACH OUT AND *KILL* SOMEONE!" AND THIS DEEP VOICE SAYS, "WELL, THERE'S MORE WHERE THAT CAME FROM!"...

THEY LIKE HER. WAVES OF APPROVAL, OF SWEET LAUGHTER, WASH OVER HER.

NOW SHE'S GOING PLACES.

YEEEEAGK!

SHE'S A SCREAM.

HA HA HA HA HAHAHAHAHAHA

THOSE ASSHOLES! I DON'T BELIEVE IT--THAT SCREWIN' MIKE WAS LIVE! THOSE CHEAP, NO GOOD...

WHO ARE YOU?

I JUST REALIZED. THAT'S EVERY COMEDIAN'S NIGHTMARE, HUH? DYING ON STAGE. HEHH..

I THOUGHT YOU WERE REALLY FUNNY.

NO. BUT I WOULD HAVE BEEN...

WHY COULDN'T I HAVE HAD A FEW MORE LOUSY YEARS? I WOULD HAVE MADE IT TO THE TOP. WHY?

I'M SORRY, ESMÉ. YOUR TIME WAS UP. COME HERE, HONEY.

I hear the sound of her wings.

NO ONE HERE GETS OUT ALIVE!

...GETS ME DOWN, TOO. MOSTLY THEY AREN'T TOO KEEN TO SEE ME. THEY FEAR THE SUNLESS LANDS. BUT THEY ENTER YOUR REALM EACH NIGHT WITHOUT FEAR.

And I am far more terrible than you, my sister.

OOTCHACOOTCHACOO?

bababaBA

KKK

BUT... IS THAT ALL THERE **WAS?** IS THAT ALL I GET?

YES, I'M AFRAID SO.

The sound of wings...

LOOK, BOOFUL, MAMA'S GOT YOU SOMETHING **LOVELY...**

HONEY?

NO!

I find myself wondering about humanity. Their attitude to my sister's gift is so strange.

Why do they fear the sunless lands?

It is as natural to die as it is to be born.

But they fear her. Dread her. Feebly they attempt to placate her.

They do not love her.

Many thousands of years ago I heard a song in a dream, a mortal song that celebrated her gift.

I still remember it.

"Death is before me today:
Like the recovery of a sick man,
Like going forth into a garden after sickness."

"Death is before me today:
Like the odor of myrrh,
Like sitting under a sail
in a good wind.

"Death is before me today:
Like the course of a stream;
Like the return of a man
from the war-galley to
his house.

"Death is before me today:
Like the home that a man longs to see,
After years spent as a captive."

That forgotten poet understood her gifts.

My sister has a function to perform, even as I do. The Endless have their responsibilities.

I have responsibilities.

I walk by her side, and the darkness lifts from my soul.

I walk with her, and I hear the gentle beating of mighty wings...

ERECTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

You have taught me something I had forgotten. I thank you, my sister.

TO ME, MAN! OVER HERE!

AW, THAT'S WHAT FAMILY'S ***ABOUT***, LI'L BROTHER. LISTEN, I'VE GOT TO HEAD BACK SOON. IT WAS GOOD SEEING YOU.

JUST ONE LAST APPOINTMENT AND THEN I HAVE TO GO.

You have given me... much to think about...

YO! FRANKLIN!

I'M *TELLIN'* YOU MAN, SHE *SAID* SHE'D SEE ME AGAIN SOON. *AND* SHE KNEW MY *NAME*. THAT'S ONE *BAAAD* LADY...

GET THE *BALL*, BUGBRAIN!

1218 PA

SKREEE

WHUMP

FRANKLIN!

WOW! WHEN THAT CAR CAME OUT I THOUGHT I WAS GONE FOR SURE!

THAT WHAT YOU THOUGHT, HUH?

HEYYY! IT'S YOU! WHEN YOU SAID YOU'D SEE ME AGAIN SOON, I DIDN'T THINK YOU MEANT THIS SOON!

HOLD THAT THOUGHT, FRANKLIN--

SEEYA, DREAM! DON'T BE A STRANGER, OKAY?

NOW, BEFORE YOU SAY ANYTHING ELSE, YOU BETTER COME OVER HERE. THERE'S SOMETHING YOU MAYBE OUGHTA SEE...

Goodbye, sister.

There is much to do in my kingdom. Much to restore. Much to create.

But that can wait...

I have found the solace I sought, though not in the way I imagined.

From dreams I conjure a handful of yellow grain...

I throw the grain into the air.

And I hear it.

The sound of wings...

SON OF ULTRON